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NAVAL STAFF HISTORY

SECOND WORLD WAR

Battle Summary No. 14 (Revised)

LOSS OF H.M. SHIPS
PRINCE OF WALES AND *REPULSE*

10th DECEMBER 1941

1955

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B.R. 1736 (8)/1955.

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HISTORICAL SECTION
ADMIRALTY, S.W.1.

Admiralty, S.W.1

16 March, 1955

H.S.16/54

B.R. 1736 (8)/1955, *Naval Staff History, Second World War, Battle Summary No.* 14 (revised) having been approved by My Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, is hereby promulgated for information and guidance.

Its contents are based on information available up to and including September, 1953.

B.R. 1736 (8)(48) is hereby superseded and all copies are to be destroyed in accordance with the instructions in B.R. 1.

By Command of Their Lordships

J. E. Lang

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Its contents
September, 1953.

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Abbreviations

A.A.	Anti-aircraft.
A/C	Aircraft.
A.M.	Admiralty Message.
A/S	Anti-submarine.
C.-in-C.	Commander-in-Chief.
C.O.	Commanding Officer.
E.F.	Eastern Fleet.
F.E.	Far East.
H.L.B.	High level bomber.
O.C.	Officer Commanding.
R/C	Reconnaissance.
R.D.F.	Radio direction finder.
T/B	Torpedo bomber.
T.O.O.	Time of origin.
T.O.R.	Time of receipt.
W/T	Wireless telegraphy.

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FOREWORD

Battle Summary No. 14 was originally issued in 1943. It was amended in 1948 in the light of statements made by Lieut.-Commander Takai I.J.N., who was Flight Leader of one of the air groups which carried out the attacks on the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse*, and by Captain Sonokawa I.J.N., who commanded the Gensan Air Group, but did not actually take part in the attack.

In 1952 a Japanese Staff Monograph on the Navy's plans and operations during the Malay-Thailand invasions became available. This monograph provides some interesting details of the Japanese measures to deal with Admiral Phillips' force, as well as clarifying several points which had previously seemed contradictory or obscure.

In the following revision the information obtained from these sources has been embodied, and various minor amendments and additions have been made throughout the narrative. Plan 2 has been re-drawn to include Japanese dispositions and approximate movements, and Appendix D has been expanded to include certain signals exchanged between the Admiralty and Admiral Phillips and those received in the War Room at Singapore after the attack.

June, 1954.

BATTLE SUMMARY NO. 14

Loss of H.M. Ships *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* 10th December, 1941

1. Introduction

In the year 1853 Commodore Matthew Perry, U.S.N., with a squadron of four ships anchored off Tokyo, bearing a letter from the President of the U.S.A. to the Mikado asking for trade facilities in Japan. The following year he returned—with a larger force—for an answer. The granting of these facilities was followed by similar demands by other Powers.

In the decade which followed, the barriers against intercourse with other nations, maintained by successive Japanese governments for over 200 years, were gradually whittled away. The new wine of Western " civilisation " was, however, too much for the old bottles of Japanese seclusion. Regrettable incidents occurred which in 1863 culminated in the bombardment of Kagosima by a British squadron under Rear-Admiral Kuper, in reprisal for the murder of a British subject by the retainers of a reactionary Japanese nobleman.

Impressed by the might of Western armaments, as compared with her war junks and swordsmen, Japan decided to reorganise her defences on the model thus provided. The era of Meiji opened. The seeds had been sown of the power which in three-quarters of a century was to challenge the very existence of the British Empire and the United States of America.

* * *

The outbreak of war between Great Britain and Germany in 1939 presented Japan with the prospect of satisfying the ambitions she cherished sooner than she had hoped; but the China " incident " was already straining her resources, and, during the initial stages of the European war, her policy, broadly speaking, was to remain neutral while losing no opportunity of improving her position in the Far East.

The opportunity came with the fall of France in June, 1940. Three months later (23rd September, 1940) Japanese troops entered French Indo-China, thus obtaining at one stroke control of vast stores of raw materials and acquiring bases conveniently situated for attacking China from the south-west, or for launching offensives against Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies. It seems probable that this latter move was decided on from the first, and that during 1941 Japanese diplomacy aimed at detaching the United States of America from the democratic front, while consolidating her position in French Indo-China and preparing for a thrust to the southward.

Whatever hopes may have previously been entertained of Japan's remaining neutral, the occupation of Indo-China was a sharp warning which could not be disregarded, and throughout the months which followed, the situation in the Far East received constant and anxious consideration from the interested Powers. The German attack on Russia in June, 1941, freed Japan—at any rate for the time being—from the danger of Russian intervention in the north,

and in July the Japanese forces in French Indo-China were increased on such a scale as to leave little doubt that offensive operations from these bases had been resolved on.

In August, 1941, the whole question of reinforcing the Far East was reviewed by the Joint Planning Committee and the Ministries in London.

2. Naval Reinforcements for the Far East

As the result of this scrutiny, the Admiralty proposed to form a fleet consisting of 7 capital ships, 1 aircraft carrier, 10 cruisers and 24 destroyers, which was to assemble in the Indian Ocean and then proceed to Singapore. This proposal, however, could not be implemented before March, 1942, both on account of necessary refits and alterations to the ships allocated, and because the light craft required would not be available before then. Various alternatives were considered, and at the end of August, 1941, it was proposed to send 3 capital ships to Trincomali, there to await developments.

During the following weeks the political situation steadily deteriorated, and at a meeting of the Defence Committee on 20th October the early arrival of some of our latest battleships in Far Eastern waters was considered of such importance on political grounds as to outweigh objections hitherto advanced by the Admiralty on strategical grounds. Accordingly it was resolved to sail the *Prince of Wales* to Capetown, and on her arrival there to review the whole situation and decide on her future movements, which would include joining the *Repulse*, then attached to the East Indies Station. Acting Vice-Admiral Sir Tom Phillips,[1] then Vice-Chief of the Naval Staff, was ordered to hoist his flag in her as Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Fleet, with the rank of Acting-Admiral; and the next day (21st October) the Admiralty informed all Authorities concerned that the *Prince of Wales* would shortly leave for Singapore.[2] This went beyond the decision reached at the Defence Committee Meeting, but was probably intended mainly to ensure that adequate administrative preparations were made for a not improbable move. Be that as it may, it seems to have been accepted by Admiral Phillips from the moment he left England that Singapore was his destination. As Vice-Chief of the Naval Staff he was fully *au fait* with the current thought at the highest level, and it seems probable that he left with the knowledge that the decision had already virtually been taken for him to go to Singapore, *unless* some quite unforeseen event should supervene during his passage. No record has been found of a formal decision on this important point, though it was much in the minds of both the Prime Minister and the First Sea Lord; but on 11th November, before the *Prince of Wales* reached Capetown, the Admiralty ordered her to meet the *Repulse* in Ceylon and to proceed in company to Singapore[3]—a course of action already recommended by Admiral Phillips himself in signals on 6th and 8th November.[4]

It had originally been intended to include an aircraft carrier in the squadron, but owing to the recent grounding of the *Indomitable* none was available. Under these circumstances, only the extreme urgency of the political situation could be held to justify continuing the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse*, with their meagre destroyer screen, to Singapore. Both ships were faster than any

[1] Rear-Admiral Sir Tom S. V. Phillips, K.C.B.

[2] Admiralty message 1648A, 21st October, 1941 (originated by A.C.N.S.(F)):—"*Prince of Wales* wearing the flag of Admiral Sir Tom Phillips, Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Fleet, and escorted by *Electra* and *Express* will leave U.K. shortly for Singapore via the Cape.
2. For security reasons this force will be known as Force 'G' from noon/24 until further orders."

[3] Admiralty Message 1516, 11th November, 1941. See Appendix D.

[4] S.O. Force "G", 1200/6 and 1637Z, 8th November, 1941. See Appendix D.

Japanese capital ship and it was hoped that they would be regarded by the Japanese as a powerful raiding force and that their presence in Far Eastern waters might possibly deter Japan from entering the war.[1] If all efforts to preserve peace failed, the knowledge of this force "in being" might at least deter them from sending expeditionary forces to the southward. It was thought that the containing power of the strong United States Fleet based on Hawaii would be sufficient to restrain them from undertaking any major venture involving the close support of their main fleet in the Gulf of Siam. As events turned out, the disaster which overtook the U.S. Fleet and Air Forces at Pearl Harbour prior to the declaration of war on 7th December, 1941, completely altered the strategical conditions on which the decision was taken to send these British reinforcements to the East.

3. Arrival at Singapore

H.M.S. *Prince of Wales* (Captain J. C. Leach), wearing the flag of Admiral Sir Tom Phillips, with the destroyers *Electra* and *Express*, sailed from the United Kingdom on 25th October and arrived at Capetown on 16th November. The next day Admiral Phillips flew to Pretoria for a meeting arranged by Mr. Winston Churchill with Field Marshal Smuts, Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa. From what is known of their conversation, the Field Marshal seems to have agreed with the policy of sending the two capital ships to Singapore as a deterrent against further Japanese agression; but a few days later he telegraphed to Mr. Churchill, expressing apprehension at the division of British and American Naval strength between Pearl Harbour and Singapore into "two fleets . . . . each separately inferior to the Japanese Navy" which he characterised as "an opening for a first class disaster."

Admiral Phillips left Capetown on 18th November and arrived at Colombo on the 28th, where he was joined by the *Repulse* (Captain W. G. Tennant). On the same day the United States Naval and Military authorities in Washington were ordering their forces in the Pacific to assume the first state of readiness, though conversations with the Japanese special envoy, Mr. Kurusu, were still actually in progress. By Admiralty orders, Admiral Phillips flew from Colombo to Singapore in order to co-ordinate plans with Commonwealth, Allied and American authorities, the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* following him on the arrival of the destroyers *Encounter* and *Jupiter*, which with the *Electra* and *Express* were all that could be spared as an anti-submarine screen. The Squadron arrived at Singapore on 2nd December.

4. Situation on Arrival, 1st December, 1941

When Admiral Phillips arrived the political situation was still most uncertain. In Washington the U.S.A.–Japanese talks had broken down, but had not been finally broken off. Mr. Kurusu was remaining in Washington, and President Roosevelt had handed him a note summarising the United States' view of the points at issue.[2] In the Far East several meetings during the past year between representatives of the A B C D[3] Powers to discuss various aspects of the defence problem had failed to produce any definite co-ordinated plan. On 29th November, however, a British, U.S.A. and Dutch air reconnaissance over the South China Sea,[4] and a patrol by two Dutch submarines

[1] Mr. Churchill in House of Commons, 29th January, 1942.

[2] The acceptance by Japan of the principles contained in this note would have involved a complete reorientation of her policy.

[3] The United States of America, British Empire, China and the Netherlands were known as the A B C D Powers.

[4] The first recorded shots of the war were fired by a Japanese cruiser at a Hudson on this patrol at 1835 (Zone – 7½), 7/12, in lat. 8° N., long. 102° 30′ E.

in lat. 8° N., long. 104° E. (about 60 miles from the south-west point of French Indo-China) had been instituted; restrictions had also been placed on the movement of Dutch and British merchant vessels.

Japanese activities were veiled in secrecy, but the intelligence that reached Singapore was not reassuring. At the beginning of November their combined fleets and all aircraft carriers were concentrated in their home waters. Special precautions had been taken to prevent observation of naval movements in the vicinity of Kure (the naval base in the Inland Sea), and there were indications that Tokyo Bay had been mined. Naval reservists previously exempt were known to have been mobilised, and merchant ships with heavy A.A. armament had been seen at Shanghai. Transport movements, especially in the Canton area, had been heavy, with a general trend to the southward; but by the first week in December they had decreased to almost normal. The most ominous sign at this time perhaps was that only 12 Japanese merchant vessels were outside Japanese controlled waters—a drop of nearly 92 per cent. on the early 1941 average; and all outward sailings to the Americas had been cancelled.

5. Naval Forces in the Pacific, 1st December, 1941

The naval situation was briefly as follows: British seagoing forces of the China Station consisted of 4 "D" class cruisers,[1] 5 "S" class destroyers,[2] and 8 motor torpedo boats. Three of the destroyers (1 refitting) and the motor torpedo boats were at Hongkong; the remainder, with the exception of the *Dauntless*, which was under orders for the United Kingdom and had got as far as Colombo, were in the vicinity of Singapore, where the C.-in-C.[3] was flying his flag ashore. A destroyer of the Royal Australian Navy[4] was also in this area, and Admiral Phillips' squadron of 2 capital ships and 4 modern destroyers was due on 2nd December.

In Australian waters were three cruisers and three destroyers[5] of the Royal Australian Navy, and a Free French heavy destroyer[6]; two cruisers of the Royal New Zealand Navy[7] were at Auckland.

The U.S. Asiatic Fleet based on Manila, consisted of 1 heavy cruiser, 1 light cruiser, 13 destroyers and 27 submarines under the command of Admiral Hart.[8] Of these, the light cruiser and six destroyers were at Balikpapan (Dutch Borneo) where they were to be joined by the heavy cruiser and a seaplane tender; the remaining 5 destroyers, with the submarines, were at Manila.

At Pearl Harbour, 5,890 miles from Singapore, was the U.S. Pacific Fleet, under Admiral Husband Kimmel. This fleet consisted of 9 battleships (1 of which was refitting in the U.S.A.), 3 aircraft carriers, 12 heavy cruisers, 10 light cruisers, 77 destroyers (45 modern, 32 pre-1921) and 33 submarines (27 modern and 6 older).

[1] *Danae, Dauntless, Dragon, Durban:* built 1917–19; 6—6-in., 3—4-in. A.A., 12 torpedo tubes; 29 knots. The modern cruiser *Mauritius* (12—6-in., 8—4-in. H.A.) was in dock at Singapore; date of completion, 25/12/41.

[2] *Scout, Stronghold, Tenedos, Thanet, Thracian:* built 1918–24; 3—4-in., 4 torpedo tubes; 36 knots.

[3] Vice-Admiral Sir Geoffrey Layton, K.C.B., D.S.O.

[4] *Vampire:* built 1917–18; 4—4-in., 6 torpedo tubes; 34 knots.

[5] *Canberra:* built 1928; 8—8-in., 8—4-in., A.A., 8 torpedo tubes; 31.5 knots. *Perth:* built 1936; 8—6-in., 8—4-in., A.A., 8 torpedo tubes; 32.5 knots. *Adelaide:* built 1918; 8—6-in., 3—4-in., A.A., 25.5 knots. *Stuart:* built 1918; 5—4.7-in., 6 torpedo tubes; 36.5 knots. *Vendetta* and *Voyager:* built 1917–18; 4—4-in., 6 torpedo tubes; 34 knots. The three destroyers were undergoing long refits after service in the Mediterranean.

[6] *Le Triomphant:* built 1934: 4—5.4-in., 1—4-in., 9 torpedo tubes; 37 knots.

[7] *Achilles, Leander:* built 1933; 8—6-in., 8—4-in., A.A. (*Achilles*, 4—4-in., A.A.), 8 torpedo tubes; 32.5 knots.

[8] Admiral Thomas C. Hart, U.S.N., afterwards C.-in-C. of Allied Naval Forces in South-West Pacific, from 5th January to 9th February, 1942.

The Dutch naval forces in the Netherlands East Indies consisted of 3[1] light cruisers, 7[1] destroyers and 13[2] submarines. Some of the latter, which were highly efficient, had been placed under operational control of Vice-Admiral Layton, and were patrolling off the Gulf of Siam.

A policy of intensive secrecy had been practised by the Japanese for many years, and up-to-date information about their fleet had been difficult to obtain. They were believed to have at their disposal 10 capital ships, 9 aircraft carriers, 6 seaplane carriers, 12 heavy cruisers,[3] 23 light cruisers, 127 destroyers and 86 submarines, besides various coast defence vessels. In addition, two 45,000-ton battleships were known to be nearing completion.

The following table shows the operational naval forces of the anti-Axis Powers[4] in the Pacific just prior to the outbreak of war, compared with those of the Japanese, as derived from information obtained since the conclusion of hostilities:—

NATIONALITY	CAPITAL SHIPS	AIRCRAFT CARRIERS	SEAPLANE CARRIERS	HEAVY CRUISERS	LIGHT CRUISERS	DESTROYERS	SUBMARINES
British Empire ..	2	—	—	1	7	13	—
U.S.A.	8	3	—	13	11	90	60
Netherlands ..	—	—	—	—	2	6	9
Free French ..	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
Total ..	10	3	—	14	21	109	69
Japan	10	10*	6	18	18	113	63

* 6 Fleet carriers; 4 Light Fleet carriers.

On paper, therefore, the disparity between the widely scattered naval forces of the anti-Axis Powers in the Pacific and the Japanese Fleet was small, except in the very important sphere of aircraft carriers.

6. Withdrawal of Capital Ships from Singapore considered

As mentioned before (Sec. 2) the decision to send Admiral Phillips' unbalanced force had been taken primarily in the hope of deterring Japan from going to war, but as the situation showed no signs of improving, anxiety was felt for the very difficult position in which the force might find itself. On 1st December the Admiralty suggested to Admiral Phillips that the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* should be sent away from Singapore. The disappearance of the capital ships, it was considered, would disconcert the Japanese, and at the same time increase the security of the force. A further message on 3rd December, prompted by a report of Japanese submarines off Singapore,

[1] One under repair.

[2] Two in reserve; very old, and no crews available. Two under repair.

[3] Actually the Japanese had 18 heavy cruisers, as they had secretly re-armed the *Chikuma* and *Mogami* classes with 7.87-in., instead of 5.5-in. guns.

[4] Except Russia. The Russians had no surface forces in the Far East, but they were believed to have substantial submarine forces based on Vladivostok.

re-iterated this proposal, and suggested as an alternative asking Admiral Hart to send destroyers " on a visit " to Singapore.[1]

On 4th December Admiral Phillips flew to Manila to concert arrangements with Admiral Hart. Admiral Phillips described the discussion as " very friendly " and stated that we could " expect full co-operation."[2] A conference with the Commonwealth and Dutch representatives in Singapore had been fixed for 8th December, and Admiral Phillips arrived back there during the forenoon on the 7th.

Events, however, moved too quickly. That night the Japanese struck; from the outset the British Army and Air Forces in Northern Malaya were being driven back. Under these circumstances, it was not possible for the Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Fleet, to refuse them assistance and the operation was undertaken which was to cost him his fleet and his life at the hands of the Japanese airmen.

7. Outbreak of War with Japan, 7th December, 1941

About noon,[3] 6th December, large Japanese convoys, totalling some 38 ships with strong escorts, were reported by aircraft off the south-west point of French Indo-China, steering to the westward towards the Gulf of Siam.[4]

On receipt of these reports Admiral Phillips signalled from Manila to his Chief of Staff, Rear-Admiral Palliser,[5] who had remained at Singapore, ordering the recall of the *Repulse* with her screen, which had sailed for Port Darwin the previous day—a step already taken by Admiral Palliser on his own responsibility—and she arrived back at noon, 7th.

Special air reconnaissance by the R.A.F. in Malaya was ordered to cover the southern part of the Gulf of Siam, but unfortunately the weather was unfavourable, with much low cloud, and no further sightings occurred that day. The Japanese might be merely proceeding to Kohtron on the west coast of Indo-China, but on the uncertainty various precautionary measures were put into operation by the ABCD Powers. Admiral Hart " alerted " four destroyers at Balikpapan; Admiral Helfrich, the Dutch Commander-in-Chief, put special air reconnaissance and naval dispositions in force, ordered the cruiser *Java* from Surabaya to Singapore at 20 knots, and decided to visit Singapore himself by Catalina on 8th December.

Throughout 7th December the weather conditions for air reconnaissance continued very bad. Except for a report of one cruiser and one transport that

[1] Admiralty Messages 1843, 1st December, and 0157, 3rd December: Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Fleet, 0923Z, 1213Z, 3rd December. *See* Appendix D. To the latter signal Admiral Phillips replied that he would discuss the question with Admiral Hart, and that he intended sending the *Repulse* with the destroyers *Vampire* and *Tenedos* on a short visit to Port Darwin, sailing on 5th December. These ships actually sailed but were recalled. He also reported that the *Prince of Wales* had been taken in hand at 72 hours' notice to make good defects which it was estimated would taken seven days to complete.

[2] C.-in-C., E.F. to Admiralty, 1733Z/7th December. *See* Appendix D. At the time this signal went out, the Japanese were already landing at Khota Bharu, and before it reached the Admiralty the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* had been sunk and Admiral Phillips was dead.

[3] Time used throughout is Zone " GH ", i.e., — 7½ (local time, Singapore) except where otherwise stated.

[4] The first reports were as follows:—
1212/6 (G.M.T. 0442/6) 3 ships in 7° 51′ N., 105° 00′ E., course 310°.
1246/6 (G.M.T. 0516/6), 25 ships escorted by 6 cruisers, 10 destroyers, in 8° N., 106° 08′ E., course 270°.
1300/6 (G.M.T. 0530/6), 10 ships escorted by 2 cruisers, 10 destroyers, in 7° 40′ N., 106° 20′ E., course 270°.
1835/7 (G.M.T. 1105/7), 1 cruiser, 1 transport, in 8° N., 102° 30′ E. (Cruiser opened fire on reconnaissance Hudson).

[5] Rear-Admiral A. F. E. Palliser, D.S.C.

evening by a Hudson—which was fired on by the cruiser[1] there was no further news of the Japanese convoys. A Catalina sent to reconnoitre the anchorages on the west coast of Cambodia made no report and failed to return.

At 0800, 7th,[2] (local time, Zone + 10½), the Japanese carried out heavy air raids on the United States Pacific Fleet and Air Base at Pearl Harbour, inflicting such serious damage as to put the fleet out of action for some months. Simultaneously invasions of Siam and Malaya commenced, followed by attacks on Hongkong, the Philippines and various Pacific Islands.[3] An announcement from Japanese Imperial Headquarters, Tokyo, that Japan was at war with the British and the U.S.A., was broadcast a few hours later.

Against Malaya (see Plan 2), landings were made at Kota Bharu in the extreme north-east, and at Singora, about 130 miles over the Siamese frontier.[4] These landings were accompanied by heavy air attacks on the three British airfields in Northern Malaya—Kota Bharu, Alor Star and Sungei Patani. Considerable fighting took place in the neighbourhood of Kota Bharu, but within 24 hours this airfield was lost, and a day later (9th December) those at Alor Star and Sungei Patani had been rendered unserviceable by bombing and were evacuated.

8. Admiral Phillips' Appreciation and Plan, 8th December, 1941

At Singapore developments in North Malaya were obscure, but it was apparent that the Japanese were making progress and that our army was hard pressed. It had been decided to merge the command of the China Station with that of the Eastern Fleet, and at 0800, 8th December, Admiral Phillips officially took over from Vice-Admiral Layton, the flag of the latter being hauled down at sunset that evening. At 1230, 8th, the Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Fleet, discussed the situation and explained his intentions at a meeting attended by the Chief of Staff,[5] the Captain of the Fleet,[6] the Commanding Officers of the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse*, and some Staff Officers.

The Japanese naval forces[7] in the Gulf of Siam were estimated at 1 battleship (probably the *Kongo*), 7 cruisers—three 8-in. and two 5·5-in.—and 20 destroyers, covering a large number of transports.

[1] These are believed to have been the first shots fired in the war against Japan.

[2] Singapore time 0200, 8th December.

[3] The timing of initial Japanese attacks was as follows:—

LOCAL TIME	ZONE	G.M.T.	ATTACK
0025/8	— 7½	1655/7	Landing Kota Bharu (N. Malaya).
0800/7	+ 10½	1830/7	Air attack on Pearl Harbour.
0400/8	— 7½	2130/7	Air raid on Singapore.
0510/8	— 8	2110/7	Air raid on Davao, Philippines.
0800/8	— 8½	2330/7	Air raid on Hongkong.
0900/8	— 8½	0030/8	Air raid on Hongkong (Kaitek) airfield; Japanese troops crossed frontier into New Territory.

[4] The Thai Government bowed to the inevitable, and accepted the Japanese demands within 24 hours.

[5] Rear-Admiral A. F. E. Palliser, D.S.C.

[6] Acting Captain L. H. Bell, R.N.

[7] For intelligence believed to have been available to Admiral Phillips, and armament of Japanese Naval Forces, *see* Appendices B and E.
Actually the forces employed by the Japanese were as follows:—
In the Gulf of Siam:—8 cruisers (five 8-in., three 5.5-in.).
14 destroyers, 10 smaller craft.
12 submarines.
In support, off S.E. Indo-China:—2 battleships.
2 cruisers (8-in.).
10 destroyers.

See Sec. 9 (postea).

Little was known about the capabilities of either their Naval or Air Forces. A cloud of secrecy had enveloped their recent development, and such intelligence as existed was mainly based on reports of them in action at Shanghai and elsewhere in China. None of their more modern units had been used in these operations. As regards the Japanese air forces in the Indo-China area, neither the Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Fleet, nor the Force Commanders on the spot, appear to have had reliable information as to their strength, disposition, types of aircraft or efficiency.[1]

Admiral Phillips' appreciation was that, *given fighter support and surprise*, the two capital ships would have a good chance of " smashing the Japanese forces " landing at Singora and Kota Bharu; and he proposed to attack them shortly after dawn on 10th December.[2]

All present at the meeting were unanimous that it was impossible for the Navy to do nothing while the Army and Air Force were being driven back, and that the plan for a sudden raid though hazardous was acceptable.

The question of fighter protection for the fleet[3] had been discussed at the Royal Air Force Headquarters. Admiral Phillips had asked for (*a*) reconnaissance 100 miles to the northward of his force at daylight, 9th December; (*b*) reconnaissance off Singora at first light, 10th December; and (*c*) fighter protection off Singora during daylight, 10th December.

9. Japanese Plan and Forces Employed. (Plan 2)

It will be convenient at this stage to exercise the privilege of being wise after the event and to glance briefly at the Japanese plan and the forces actually employed to carry it out.

The plan involved initial landings during the night of 7th/8th December at Kota Bharu and at Singora, Tepha and Patani, to be followed a few hours later by landings at four ports further north in Siam—Nakhon Sri Tamaret, Bandon, Chumphon and Prachuap. Once a footing had been obtained, airfields from which aircraft could operate in support of the follow-up, were the prime objectives.

The troops for these initial landings were embarked in 28 transports, which sailed in convoy from various ports in Hainan and Indo-China for a rendezvous in the southern part of the Gulf of Siam. On arrival there early in the forenoon of 7th December, the transports steered directly for their respective anchorages. The convoys were escorted by the 3rd Destroyer Flotilla, consisting of the light cruiser *Sendai* (flag, Rear-Admiral Hashimoto) and 10 destroyers, 6 minesweepers and 3 submarine chasers; these subsequently covered the landings in the Singora and Kota Bharu areas, while the training cruiser *Kashii* and frigate *Shumushu* looked out for those further north. Anti-submarine reconnaissance was provided by seaplanes working from the coast of Indo-China.

[1] War experience up to this time indicated that attacks by torpedo carrying aircraft had not been carried out at long range, and attacks by dive bombers had been confined to within 200 miles of airfields. High level bombing against modern capital ships was not likely to cause vital damage. Singora and Kota Bharu were over 300 miles from the nearest Indo-China air bases.

In addition, reports on the capability of Japanese air personnel had for a number of years been consistently adverse, and may have tended to discount the possibility of their delivering a heavy scale of attack at long range.

[2] Admiral Phillips was under no illusion that the Japanese line of communication from Indo-China could be permanently disrupted without carrier support. The operation he planned was an isolated surprise attack which, if successful, would relieve the pressure on our troops and might throw the Japanese plan seriously out of gear.

[3] Approval had been given to station four long range fighter squadrons for fleet protection in the Far East, but it had not been possible by the outbreak of war to provide them. Reliance had therefore to be placed on short range fighters. The Air Forces stationed in Malaya are shown in Appendix C.

The whole " Southern Expeditionary Force " was commanded by Vice-Admiral Ozawa, with his flag in the 8-in., cruiser *Chokai*, and cover was provided by the 7th cruiser division—the 8-in. cruisers *Kumano* (flag), *Suzuya*, *Mikuma* and *Mogami*—and four destroyers under Vice-Admiral Kurita. In support, off the south-east coast of Indo-China, were the battleships *Kongo* and *Haruna*, the 8-in. cruisers *Atago*, wearing the flag of the Commander-in-Chief, Vice-Admiral Kondo, and *Takao* and 10 destroyers.

Twelve submarines of the 4th and 9th Flotillas were disposed between Singapore and the scene of operations as shown in Plan 2, while the flagships of these flotillas—the light cruisers *Kinu* and *Yura*—cruised as convenient well to the north of the patrols. It had been intended that two submarines should mine the eastern entrance to Singapore Strait, but this part of the plan was never carried out; mines were, however, laid by the surface minelayer *Tatsumiya Maru* between Pulo Tioman and the Anambas.

Strong naval air forces—99 bombers, 6 reconnaissance aircraft and 39 fighters were based in the region of Saigon and at Soktran in southern Indo-China. Their task was first to destroy the main British air strength in the Singapore area, and then to maintain full control of the air.

From the foregoing it will be seen that Admiral Phillips' chances of carrying out his raid on Singora without being brought to action by very superior forces were slender in the extreme. At the time he was holding his meeting, all seven Siamese ports had been occupied practically without resistance. Only at Kota Bharu had there been any hitch. There the assault troops were stoutly opposed, and from about 0200 repeated air attacks were made on the transports. All three were damaged[1] and in the early morning (8th December) withdrew to the Patani area, to await nightfall before continuing the disembarkation. This then was roughly the situation when Admiral Phillips undertook his ill-fated attempt.

10. Movements of Force " Z ", 8th–10th December, 1941. (Plan 2)

Having formed his design, Admiral Phillips sailed from Singapore at 1735, 8th December. Just prior to sailing he was informed that it was doubtful if the fighter protection off Singora on 10th December could be provided.

The squadron, known as Force " Z ", consisted of the *Prince of Wales* (flag), *Repulse* and the destroyers *Electra*, *Express*, *Vampire* and *Tenedos*.[2] Course was shaped to the E.N.E. to pass east of the Anamba Islands in order to avoid possible minefields.

At 0125, 9th, an important signal[3] was received from the Chief of Staff who had remained at Singapore, which confirmed that the air reconnaissance asked for had been arranged, but stated that owing to the military situation fighter protection off Singora on Wednesday, 10th December, would not be possible.[4] It added that the Japanese had large bomber forces based in southern Indo-China and possibly in Thailand and that a request had been

[1] One, the *Awajisan Maru*, was set on fire; she was sunk by bombers the next day. The landings had been completed by the evening of 9th December, and the other two transports withdrew, both badly damaged.

[2] *See* Appendix A. The *Jupiter* and *Encounter* were undergoing repairs at Singapore. The " D " class cruisers on the station were fully employed on escort duties, and in any case lacked speed; and the *Exeter* which, on the outbreak of war had been ordered to Singapore from the Bay of Bengal, could not arrive before 10th December. Force " Z " therefore comprised all the effective forces at Admiral Phillips' disposal.

[3] *See* Appendix D (i).

[4] The reason was that Kota Bharu airfield had been lost.

made to General MacArthur[1] to attack the Indo-China airfields with long range bombers as soon as possible. Finally, it informed the Admiral that Kota Bharu airfield had been evacuated and we seemed to be " losing grip " in the other northern airfields, due to enemy action.

One of the two conditions postulated by Admiral Phillips—fighter support—had vanished; nevertheless, he decided to carry out the operation, provided he was not sighted by enemy aircraft during the 9th December, and at 0400 course was altered to the northward.

Captain Bell[2] states that the Commander-in-Chief's plan was to detach the destroyers,[3] which he considered very vulnerable to air attack, at midnight 9th/10th December, and make a high speed descent on Singora with the heavy ships, relying on surprise and the speed of the battleships' attack to avoid damage. He calculated that the Japanese aircraft would not be carrying anti-ship bombs and torpedoes, and that his force would only have to deal with hastily organised long-range bombers from Indo-China during its retirement.

At 0620, 9th, an aircraft was reported by the *Vampire*; it was sighted for a few seconds by one look-out only, and as the weather was favourable for evasion, with frequent rain squalls and low cloud, the squadron held its course to the northward. Between 1700 and 1830, however, the weather cleared and three Japanese naval reconnaissance aircraft were sighted from the *Prince of Wales*[4] at 1740. This meant that all hopes of surprise had been lost, and a heavy scale of air attack off Singora had to be anticipated. Under these circumstances the Commander-in-Chief decided that the risk was unjustifiable and that he must give up his project. At 1825 the *Tenedos*, which was running short of fuel, was detached to Singapore, with orders to transmit a signal to the Chief-of-Staff at 0800, 10th, requesting destroyers to meet Force " Z " off the Anambas at dawn, 11th December.[5] The remainder of the squadron altered course to the north-westward at 1850 and to the westward for Singora at 1930 (presumably to mislead the shadowers). They were then only about 15 miles to the southward of Admiral Kurita's four heavy cruisers which at that moment altered from a southerly to a north-easterly course to join their battlefleet. (*See* Sec. 11.) Completely unaware of this narrowly missed contact,[6] Admiral Phillips continued to the westward till 2015, when he finally abandoned the operation and reluctantly shaped course at high speed for Singapore. A spontaneous signal from the Captain of the *Repulse*, showing that he appreciated the difficulty of this decision and agreed with it, cheered the Commander-in-Chief at this disappointing moment.

During the evening further signals from the Chief-of-Staff gave warning of the possible presence of aircraft carriers off Saigon, and of enemy bombers

[1] General D. MacArthur, C.-in-C., Philippines. Immediately on the outbreak of war the U.S. authorities had directed him to " Co-operate with British and Dutch to the utmost " . . . . and authorised him to despatch air units to operate temporarily . . . . " in co-operation with the British or Dutch."

[2] Captain Bell was the senior surviving Staff Officer. The narrative which follows is chiefly based on his report and those of Captain Tennant of the *Repulse* and Lt.-Comdr. Skipwith, senior surviving officer of the *Prince of Wales*.

[3] Except the *Electra*, none was fully worked up. Their operational endurance, too, was a perpetual anxiety.

[4] These aircraft came from the cruisers *Kinu* and *Kumano*. According to Japanese sources, no shore based aircraft carried out reconnaissance that day on account of the unfavourable weather.

[5] *See* Appendix D. It is curious that this signal (T.O.O. 1455/9) which had been passed to the *Tenedos* at 1625, i.e., before the C.-in-C. knew he had been located and when he still intended to carry out his attack, should have been allowed to stand when the *Tenedos* was detached three-quarters of an hour after he knew he had been sighted.

[6] It is interesting to reflect that had the two forces maintained their original courses a quarter of an hour longer, Matapan might well have been repeated or Savo Island anticipated, according to which sighted the other first.

" in force and undisturbed " in south Indo-China; and painted a gloomy picture of the course of events on shore in North Malaya.

At 2335, 9th, a report came in of an enemy landing at Kuantan (lat. 3° 50′ N.).[1] This was over 150 miles to the southward of Kota Bharu, and it seemed unlikely that the enemy would expect Force " Z "—last located on a northerly course in the latitude of Singora (7° 12′ N.)—to be as far south by daylight. Kuantan was a key military position of great importance; it was not far off the return track to Singapore and was 400 miles from the Japanese airfields in French Indo-China. On these grounds the Admiral deemed surprise probable and the risk justifiable, and at 0052, 10th December, altered course accordingly, increasing speed to 25 knots.

11. Enemy Re-action, 9th–10th December[2]

Turning now to the Japanese side of the story, bad weather had precluded air search by shore based aircraft on 9th December, but that afternoon the squadron had been sighted by a submarine (*I.*65),[3] which reported it in a position 196° 225 miles from Pulo Condore (lat. 8° 45′ N., long. 106° 38′ E.) steering 310° at 14 knots (at 1343). The signal was received at 1540, and the whole naval force which had been covering the landings, then to the southward of Indo-China, on its way back to Kamranh-Bay, was ordered to be prepared to intercept Force " Z "; it remained cruising in this area, pending further information.

The report reached the 22nd Air Flotilla, based in the vicinity of Saigon, at about 1600. This Flotilla was specially highly trained in bombing and torpedo attacks. It consisted of three groups—the " Genzan " and " Mihoro " Groups, each equipped with 36 Type 96 bombers, and the " Kanoya " Group, which had recently acquired the new Type 1 bombers.[4] There were only 26 aircraft in this latter group, the remainder being detached to Formosa.

At the time the submarine's report came in, the Air Flotilla was bombing up for an attack on Singapore. Orders were given to exchange bombs for torpedoes as quickly as possible, but the change-over was not completed till 1800, by which time it was getting dark[5]; the menace to the invasion transports, however, was considered so grave that it was decided to attempt a night attack. Owing to bad weather the aircraft failed to find Force " Z "; all returned safely to their base about midnight.

In the meantime Force " Z " had been located by aircraft from the *Kinu* and *Kumano*, and Admiral Kondo, who was moving south from Hainan with the battlefleet, decided to try to keep touch with Force " Z " by aircraft

[1] *See* Appendix D (i).

[2] This section is based on Japanese Monograph No. 107, and on statements by two Japanese officers, Lieut.-Commander Takai I.J.N., a Flight Leader in the Genzan Air Group, who took part in the attack on Force " Z ", and Captain Sonokawa I.J.N., who commanded the Genzan Air Group, but was not himself present at the attack.

[3] *See* Sec. 9 ante, and plan 2.

[4] Twin engined monoplanes, each carrying crew of 7. Details:—

TYPE	RANGE: BOMB LOAD	ECONOM: SPEED	MAX: SPEED	GUNS
97	2125 miles 1100 lb	157 m.p.h.	270 m.p.h.	2—20-mm 4—7.7-mm
1	3075 miles 2200 lb	145 m.p.h.	283 m.p.h.	2—20-mm 5—7.7-mm

[5] Sunset 1800; end of civil twilight, 1822.

and submarines during the night, and to attack at dawn with all available naval aircraft. Any success they might have was to be exploited by the surface forces. With this end in view he ordered Admiral Ozawa's forces to join his flag at 0230, 10th, south of Poulo Condore, when he would move with his whole fleet to the southward on the flank of Admiral Phillips' probable line of retreat.

The shadowing aircraft, however, lost touch with Force " Z " during the night, owing to rain squalls, but at 0221, 10th December, the submarine *I.*58 sighted it on a southerly course. She at once attacked and fired five torpedoes, which missed. She then surfaced and followed at 16 knots, but finally lost contact at 0305.

On receipt of *I.*58's report at about 0315 it was clear that Force " Z " was out of reach of the fleet, which set course for Kamranh Bay at 0645. All then depended on aircraft and submarines.

At Saigon 12 aircraft of the Genzan group, each armed with two 60 kg. bombs, took off at 0600 to conduct a sector search.[1]

About an hour later the Striking Force, consisting of 84 aircraft (34 bombers and 50 torpedo planes) was ordered to the estimated position of the ships. The force was organised in flights of about 9 aircraft; the general plan was to attack continuously, starting with a bombing attack from about 8,000 feet (2,500 metres) by the Genzan group, the Mihoro and Kanoya groups following in turn as they arrived. All attacks were to be controlled by the Flight Leaders, according to the way in which the situation developed. As will be seen, the attacks were carried out almost exactly as planned.[2]

After making their rendezvous, the flights proceeded independently to the south along the 105th meridian. Nothing was seen of the British ships during this southerly run and after sighting Singapore they turned to the northward—a course which was to lead them straight to their quarry, which was sighted by land based reconnaissance aircraft at 1026.

12. Loss of the Prince of Wales and Repulse

Force " Z " (*Prince of Wales*, *Repulse*, *Electra*, *Express* and *Vampire*) in the meantime had been closing the shore at 25 knots, and at dawn,[3] 10th December, was some sixty miles E.N.E. of Kuantan. The sun had just risen when the *Repulse* reported an aircraft, which was not identified[4]; the force continued to the westward, a reconnaissance aircraft[5] being flown off by the *Prince of Wales*, and arrived off Kuantan at 0800.

No enemy forces were sighted, and the *Express*, which was sent to investigate the harbour, reported " complete peace ", rejoining the flag at 0845. The Commander-in-Chief then decided to examine a tug with some barges which had been sighted at extreme visibility during the run in, and altered course to the northward and then to the eastward for this purpose. It was while steaming to the eastward that Force " Z " was attacked by successive waves of Japanese bombing and torpedo aircraft which eventually sank both capital ships.

[1] Owing to short visibility, the search aircraft did not locate Force " Z " till after beginning the return leg, and it was not until 1100 that this contact was broadcast to the Striking Force and Headquarters.

[2] One flight of bombers became separated; these attacked what was taken for a British minelayer—actually the *Tenedos* (*see* Sec. 12)—in the vicinity of the Anamba Islands.

[3] Sunrise was at 0630. Civil twilight commenced at 0608.

[4] Captain Tennant referred to this definitely as an " enemy reconnaissance aircraft ".

[5] It was from this aircraft, which had been ordered to land on shore, that the first news of Admiral Phillips' change of plan and consequent presence off Kuantan reached Singapore (at about 1130).

Shortly after 1000, 10th, reports of hostile aircraft were received from the destroyer *Tenedos*—then being bombed 140 miles to the south-east—and at 1020 a shadowing aircraft was sighted from the *Prince of Wales*, and the first degree of readiness was assumed. Soon afterwards an enemy aircraft bearing 220° was picked up by the *Repulse*'s radar.

At 1100 course was altered to 135° by blue pendant, bringing the heavy ships into starboard quarter line, and a few minutes later nine enemy aircraft[1] were sighted approaching from the starboard bow, flying at about 10,000 feet. All ships, except the *Vampire*, which was outranged, opened fire at 1113. Quite unperturbed the enemy concentrated a high level bombing attack on the *Repulse*. One bomb fell just clear to starboard, seven very close to port, and one[2] hit the port hangar, bursting on the armour below the marines' mess deck at 1122. This caused a fire in the catapult deck and fractured a steam pipe, but no damage was done to the engine or boiler rooms and the fire was rapidly got under control.

Twenty minutes later nine torpedo bombers attacked from the port bow. They had been seen to cross from starboard to port at extreme range, and after making use of cloud on the port beam to do a series of turns together, attacked in waves of two or three in line abreast. The attack was " very well executed and the enemy in no way perturbed by our gunfire." The *Repulse* altered right away to starboard, and escaped unhurt. The *Prince of Wales*

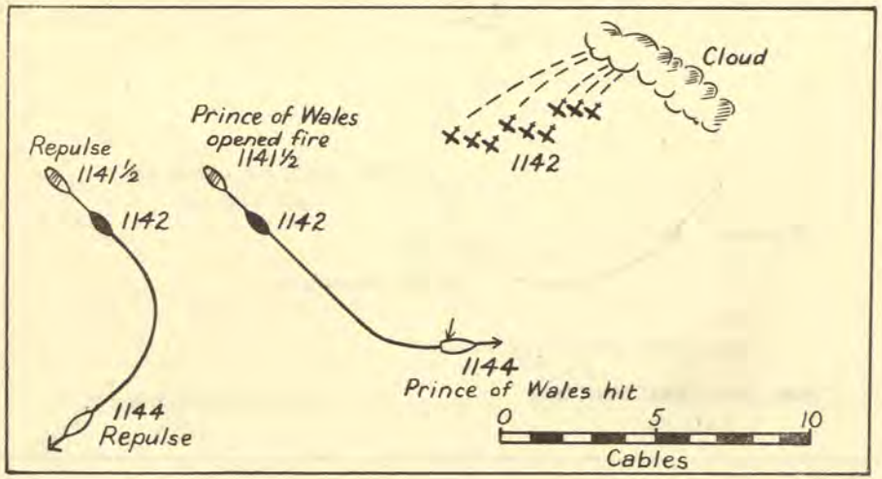

Fig. 1

First Torpedo Attack, 1141–1144, 10th December

Note.—Plan is approximate only, from written reports

altered course to port, and it was thought at the time that she also avoided all the torpedoes fired at her except one, which at 1144 hit the port side aft, approximately abreast of " P3 " and " P4 " turrets, but it now seems probable

[1] According to the Japanese, 8 aircraft of the Mihoro group.

[2] Estimated about 250 lb. (Actually about 550 lb.)

that she was actually hit simultaneously by another torpedo abaft " Y " turret.[1] The consequences of this attack were disastrous. " B " engine room, " Y " boiler room, the port Diesel engine room and " Y " action machinery room were flooded; both port propeller shafts stopped; the speed dropped to 15 knots; the steering gear was injured, and the ship was never again under complete control. Within a few minutes she assumed a list of 13° to port and increased her trim by the stern, till by 1220 the port side of the quarter deck was awash.[2] All the 5·25-in. armament, except S1, was put out of action either due to the list or failure of power.

As they crossed the line of advance after dropping their torpedoes, two of the enemy aircraft were hit; one crashed into the sea on the starboard beam.

Six minutes later (1156) the *Repulse* was attacked by another group of nine torpedo bombers. These came in from her port side; she altered course towards them and succeeded in combing a large number of torpedo tracks.

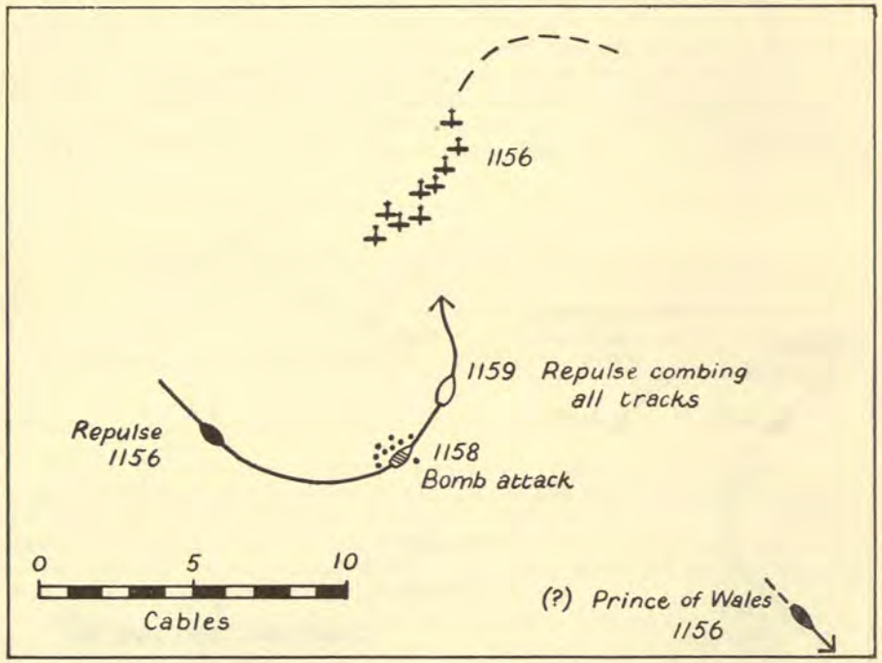

FIG. 2

SECOND TORPEDO AND BOMB ATTACK, 1156–1159, 10TH DECEMBER

Note.—Plan is conjectural only, from written reports. Actual courses are unknown, movements shown are relative. Position of *Prince of Wales* is unknown. *Vampire* reported *Repulse* " well to starboard and astern of *Prince of Wales*." Captain Tennant stated " ships had opened to some distance apart."

[1] There is evidence from survivors in support of this opinion, though only one explosion —abreast " P3 " and " P4 " turrets—was seen from the *Repulse* and the escorting destroyers. Since practically all the survivors agreed that there was only one very severe shock, both torpedoes must have detonated simultaneously. A committee under the chairmanship of the Hon. Mr. Justice Bucknill, which subsequently investigated the loss of the ship, considered that the rapid and extensive flooding which occurred in two distinct areas could not have been caused by less than two torpedoes.

[2] Counter flooding to reduce the list was ordered by Captain Leach very shortly after the hit.

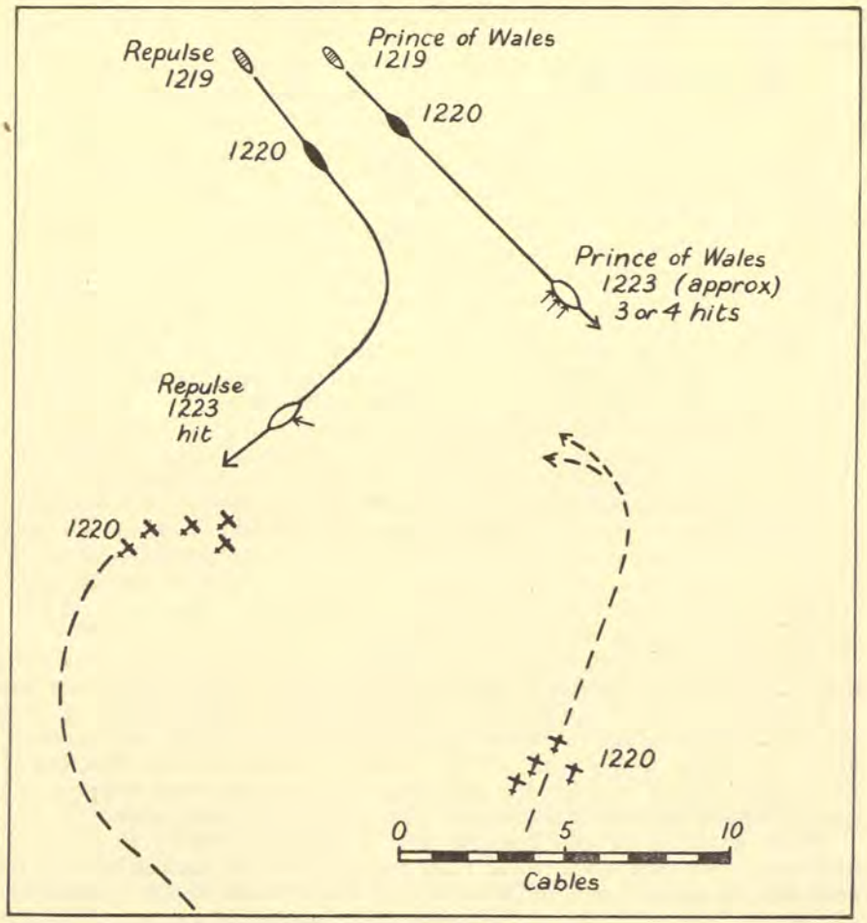

FIG. 3

THIRD TORPEDO ATTACK, 1219–1223, 10TH DECEMBER

Note.—Plan is approximate only, from written reports

Almost simultaneously a high level bombing attack developed, again concentrated on the *Repulse*.[1] The ship was manoeuvring at high speed, being actually under helm when the bombs fell at 1158, and escaped untouched. There was one near miss to starboard and the remainder fell just clear to port.

Owing to independent avoiding action, the two ships had opened some distance apart. Captain Tennant, who was uncertain what signals the *Prince of Wales* had made, himself made an emergency W/T report " Enemy aircraft bombing " at 1158,[2] and, after the second high level bombing attack, he informed the Commander-in-Chief by visual that the *Repulse* had so far avoided all torpedoes and that damage from the bomb which had hit her was under control. He also asked him whether the flagship's wireless was still in action, in case he wished any reports made by the *Repulse*. At 1210 the *Prince of Wales* hoisted " not under control " balls, and Captain Tennant closed her, reducing to 20 knots, to see if he could be of any assistance. Another attack was developing. About eight aircraft were sighted low on the horizon on the starboard bow of the *Repulse*; when about three miles distant, they split into two formations. The right-hand one attacked the *Repulse* from the starboard side, dropping their torpedoes at about 2,500 yards range.

Captain Tennant, foreseeing this, had already started to swing the ship to starboard, and anticipated no difficulty in combing their tracks. The left hand formation was apparently making straight for the *Prince of Wales*—at that time abaft of the *Repulse's* port beam—but it suddenly turned straight at the latter and dropped torpedoes when about 2,000 yards on her port beam. No avoiding action was possible, as any large alteration of course would have incurred a hit from the torpedoes whose tracks were already being combed, and one torpedo hit amidships on the port side. This she stood well, and continued to manoeuvre at about 25 knots.

Almost at the same time the *Prince of Wales* was attacked from her starboard side. She seemed incapable of taking avoiding action, and sustained two hits at 1223, and a further two a minute and a half later. The first two of these hits were forward of the breakwater and just before the bridge; the others aft, near " Y " turret and abreast of " B " turret. The immediate effect was to reduce the list to 3° to port; the starboard outer propeller shaft stopped, and speed dropped to about eight knots.[3] One aircraft was shot down.

Fresh waves of torpedo bombers then attacked the *Repulse* from several directions. She shot down two at 1226, but a torpedo hit jammed her steering gear, and, though she could still steam at well over 20 knots, almost immediately afterwards three torpedoes hit her abreast the superstructure, two simultaneously on the port side and one on the starboard side. She turned sharply 90° to starboard, listing heavily to port; this brought her fine on the *Prince of Wales'* quarter, steering a parallel course. Captain Tennant knew then that the end was at hand, and at once gave the order for everyone to come on

[1] Captain Tennant remarked that the enemy were possibly aware that the bombs—particularly if they were only 250-lb—would have little chance of penetrating the *Prince of Wales'* horizontal armour, and therefore confined these high level bombing attacks to the *Repulse*.

[2] This signal reached the operation room at Air Headquarters, Singapore, at 1219. A small force of fighters took off from Sembawang at 1226 and arrived on the scene of action at 1315, just as the *Prince of Wales* capsized.

[3] At about this time a periscope was reported to Sub-Lieutenant Brooke, Fire Direction Officer, S1 pom-pom. Deeming that this new menace could only cause alarm, he ordered the men to take no notice, and to concentrate on the aircraft. The presence of a submarine was not substantiated.

deck and to cast loose the Carley floats.[1] The last moments of the *Repulse* were described by him as follows: " Men were now pouring up on deck. They had all been warned 24 hours before to carry or wear their life-saving apparatus. When the ship had a 30° list to port, I looked over the starboard side of the bridge and saw the Commander and two or three hundred men collecting on the starboard side. I never saw the slightest sign of panic or ill discipline.[2] I told them from the bridge how well they had fought the ship, and wished them good luck. The ship hung for at least a minute and a half to two minutes with a list of about 60° or 70° to port and then rolled over at 1233."[3]

During these attacks the *Express* had been screening on the flagship's starboard bow, and the *Vampire* on her port bow, while the *Electra*, which had been detached to pick up a man who had fallen overboard from the *Prince of Wales* at 1205, was between the two capital ships. The two latter at once closed the *Repulse* by order of the Commander-in-Chief, and succeeded in rescuing 42 out of 69 officers (including Captain Tennant) and 754 out of 1,240 ratings.[4] Several formations of enemy aircraft were in the vicinity, but no attempt was made to bomb or machine-gun the destroyers or survivors, and the Commanding Officer of the *Electra* expresses the opinion that they purposely refrained from any hostile act during the rescue work.

The *Prince of Wales* meanwhile had been heading north, her speed reduced to eight knots. Just after the *Repulse* capsized nine H.L.B.s were seen passing from port to starboard, and ten minutes later a high level bombing attack developed from ahead. At 1244 a bomb hit her near " S3 " turret, wrecking the port crane and canteen flat, and causing a fire. It failed, however, to pierce the armoured deck. The remainder missed narrowly aft, falling on both sides of the ship.

The scene on the compass platform during this attack, where the Commander-in-Chief had remained throughout the action, is vividly described in a few words by the torpedo officer. " Some guns in the forward group still going. Again steady formation of nine—waited for bombs to arrive—Captain said to Admiral ' now ', and we all laid flat—pattern hit ship aft. . . . "

At 1250 a signal was sent to Singapore requesting all available tugs, but by this time the ship was clearly doomed and a few minutes later the *Express* went alongside the starboard quarter, and the disembarkation of wounded and men not required to fight the ship commenced. Carley floats were launched and the gripes cast off the boom boats. By 1310 the ship was settling rapidly, listing steeply to port, and orders were passed to inflate lifebelts and abandon ship. At 1320 she heeled over sharply, turned turtle and sank.[5]

As she disappeared five friendly fighters appeared on the scene, and flew round the destroyers during their rescue work. In the distance a flight of Japanese bombers was seen to jettison its bombs before making off to the northward.

[1] Captain Tennant remarked, " The decision for a Commanding Officer to make, to cease all work in the ship below, is an exceedingly difficult one, but knowing the ship's construction I felt very sure she would not survive four torpedoes, and this was borne out, for she only remained afloat about six or seven minutes after I gave the order for everyone to come on deck. I attribute the fact that so many men were fortunately able to be saved to those six or seven minutes, combined with the fact that the broadcast apparatus was still in action."

[2] All accounts agreed that the discipline and morale of the ships' companies of both the *Repulse* and the *Prince of Wales* throughout was beyond praise. A spontaneous tribute from an independent source will be found in Appendix H.

[3] According to the *Vampire's* reckoning approximately in lat. 3° 43′ N., long. 104° 24½′ E.

[4] Captain Tennant reported, " They did their work in a most efficient manner and I cannot say enough of their work of rescue and care of the ship's company on their way back to harbour . . . . I am very certain that no one surviving was left."

[5] Approximate position 3° 34′ N., 104° 26′ E. In 1954 H.M.S. *Defender* located the wreck in 3° 33·6′ N., 104° 28·7′ E.

Skilfully handled, the *Express* had remained alongside until the last possible moment and had to go full speed astern to clear herself, sustaining damage from a projection on the hull of the battleship—possibly the bilge keel—as she heeled over. The next three-quarters of an hour was spent in rescue work, at the end of which time she was completely full, and at 1415 course was set for Singapore. All the remaining survivors for whom she had no room were then on rafts or in boats, from whence they were subsequently picked up by the *Electra* and *Vampire*. A total of 90 officers out of 110 and 1,195 ratings out of 1,502 were rescued. Neither the Commander-in-Chief nor Captain Leach[1] was among them.

At 1515 the *Vampire* left the scene of action, and after a final search the *Electra* followed her at 1602, all three destroyers arriving at Singapore between 2300, 10th, and midnight. On the way in four United States destroyers sent by Admiral Hart in response to Admiral Phillips' appeal a few days before were met steering to the northward.

13. Japanese Air Tactics

Doubts as to the efficiency of the Japanese Air Force had been answered in no uncertain terms. On the third day of the war, they had accomplished —in a little under two hours—what no other belligerent had succeeded in doing in two years, and that some 400 miles from their base, and with trifling loss to themselves. Captain Tennant stated: " The enemy attacks were without doubt magnificently carried out," and all who witnessed them agreed as to the " determination and efficiency with which they were pressed home."

The aircraft all came in and delivered their attacks in similar fashion, the high level bombers in a tight formation and the torpedo bombers in loose line ahead.

The high level bombing was carried out by formations of nine aircraft from approximately 10,000 to 12,000 feet. The machines maintained perfect line abreast formation throughout, the two in the centre being very slightly ahead of the remainder. The attacks were delivered along the fore and aft line, the bombs apparently being released by signal, as they dropped simultaneously and very close together.[2]

Long range high angle fire appeared to leave them untouched and unmoved.

The torpedo attacks were also carried out by formations of nine aircraft, though in some cases the numbers may have varied. They were usually sighted high up in close formation. They lost height gradually while still out of range, and at the same time strung out into a loose, staggered line ahead, then attacking in waves of two or three in line abreast. Each aircraft appeared to take individual aim, and no zones of torpedo attack seemed to be tried; nor was any attempt seen to concert or vary their attacks. The fact that some attacks did coincide, and, as in the case of the *Repulse*, from either side was in Captain Bell's opinion attributable to the ship's alterations of course.

[1] Lieutenant M. Graham, R.N.V.R., while swimming to the *Express*, came on the body of Captain Leach floating in the water. With the help of some seamen, he endeavoured to tow him, but after 10 minutes this proved too much for them. Lieutenant Graham is quite certain that the captain was dead.

There is no record of anything being seen of the C.-in-C. after the ship capsized. Just before this, he ordered his coxswain, C.P.O. Saysell, who was rescued by the *Express*, to " get down and out of it."

[2] There was doubt as to the size of the bombs used. In the *Repulse*, the estimate was 250 lb. from the size of the hole in the port hangar (diameter 15-in.); from the size of the splash Captain Bell put it at " possible 1,000 lb." The gunnery officer of the *Prince of Wales* thought them not bigger than 500 lb. Actually, the bombs used in the first attack were about 500 lb., and those subsequently 1,000 lb.

Torpedoes were dropped at ranges of between 1,000 and 2,000 yards, and at a height noticeably greater than was customary by British aircraft.[1] They were estimated to enter the water at an angle of between 25° and 40° to the horizontal, and ran very straight. It was noticed that a considerable period elapsed between the entry and the appearance of the track from about the same spot. The tracks were exceptionally clear in the calm water, and the torpedoes appeared to be running shallow, though one of the hits on the *Repulse* was seen to be under the starboard bilge keel when she finally rolled over. The ship probably had a list to port at the time of this hit.[2]

Commenting on the first torpedo attacks,[3] Captain Tennant stated that he was greatly assisted in dodging a large number of torpedoes by all bridge personnel calmly pointing out approaching aircraft; he maintained a steady course at 25 knots until they appeared committed to the attack, when the wheel was put over and the tracks providentially combed.

The enemy appeared to take little avoiding action, even after dropping their torpedoes. In retiring they rose heavily and vanished slowly, passing close to the ship attacked. In some cases they opened fire with machine-guns on exposed personnel as they passed.

Captain Bell remarked that our short-range fire was more accurate than the high angle fire, but all weapons continued to fire at near targets which had dropped their torpedoes and were harmless, rather than at new targets coming in to the attack.

The Japanese, on the other hand, considered the high angle fire against the bombers the more accurate. The first flight to attack met particularly fierce opposition and most of them were damaged; many aircraft returned to base riddled with holes as the result of near misses. Though the torpedo aircraft met with far more intense fire—especially from light and medium weapons—than had been expected, few hits were scored against them and only three aircraft and 21 men were lost in action. Two others ran short of fuel later on and made forced landings on the south coast of French Indo-China, both crews being picked up. The Japanese ascribed the lightness of their losses to the cloudy weather, and to the low altitude at which the torpedo bombers came in. As they had anticipated losing 50 per cent. of the aircraft, they might well be satisfied with their forenoon's work.

14. Conclusion

As soon as the news of the loss of Admiral Phillips was received in the Admiralty, orders were sent to Vice-Admiral Layton to re-hoist his flag as Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Fleet.[4] By his direction, reports from the surviving officers and men of Force " Z " were collected—a task already

[1] Captain Tennant remarks: " I think it interesting to report here the remarkable height from which the torpedoes were dropped, estimated to be between three and four hundred feet, and all torpedoes appeared to run perfectly straight from the point of dropping." Captain Bell stated: " Some torpedoes appeared to be dropped from well over 200 feet. As high as 500 feet was quoted by one observer. Certainly the height of drop appeared greater than is normal with our planes. No tail or glider attachment was seen." Subsequent experience of the United States Navy tends to confirm these estimates. Referring to Japanese tactics in the Coral Sea action (7th May, 1942), the C.-in-C., Pacific, remarked: " Some came in at a constant low level and dropped torpedoes 150 to 200 feet from the water at a relatively high speed; others approached in a high speed glide, and dropped from heights of as much as 500 feet."

[2] Subsequent information from U.S. sources indicated that the Japanese Navy used a standard depth setting of about 12 feet for torpedoes, but at this time the depth setting was left to the choice of the attacking unit. Against the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* settings of 10, 13 and 16 feet were used by the Kanoya, Mihoro and Genzan Groups respectively.

[3] 1144–1156; *see* Appendix F.

[4] Admiralty Signal 2250 A/10 (0520/11 Local time, Singapore).

commenced by Captain Bell and Lieut.-Commander Skipwith in the *Express* immediately after the action—and a narrative of the operation was drawn up by Commodore F. E. P. Hutton. On these documents, together with information now available from Japanese sources, the foregoing account is principally based.

Once again the lesson of Norway and Crete had received tragic confirmation; fighter support for surface forces operating where there is a possibility of strong enemy air attack is a prime necessity.

As though to point the lesson, two months later two German capital ships, heavily screened by fighters, were to brave the might of the Air Forces in the United Kingdom within 20 miles of its shores, and to get away unscathed.[2]

One ray of light emerges from the story—the magnificent morale of the crews of the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* throughout the action. All the reports agree that this was of an exceptionally high order. This indomitable spirit persisting in disaster, a peculiarly British characteristic so often exemplified in the past, has always reaped its reward in ultimate success.

[2] Factors other than fighter support—such as short visibility—aided the escape of the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*; nevertheless the attack of the Swordfish was seriously hampered by fighters, and it seems probably that they accounted for many of the 22 British bombers subsequently lost.

APPENDIX A

H.M. SHIPS OF FORCE "Z" WITH COMMANDING OFFICERS

Prince of Wales (10—14-in.) ..	Flag, Act. Admiral Sir Tom Phillips, K.C.B., Captain J. C. Leach, M.V.O., D.S.O.
Repulse (6—15-in.)	Captain W. B. Tennant, C.B., M.V.O.
Electra (4—4·7-in.)	Commander C. W. May.
Express (4—4·7-in.)	Lt.-Comdr. F. J. Cartwright.
[1]*Vampire* (4—4-in.)	Commander W. T. A. Moran, R.A.N.
Tenedos (3—4-in.)	Lieut. R. Dyer.

[1] Royal Australian Navy.

APPENDIX B

ENEMY INTELLIGENCE BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN AVAILABLE TO C.-IN-C., EASTERN FLEET

Prior to sailing from Singapore	After sailing
(a) Naval	
1 battleship (probably *Kongo*).	1 aircraft carrier squadron in Saigon area (T.O.R. 2302/9), and 1 aircraft carrier off Singora. (T.O.R. 0911/10.)
7 cruisers (3—8-in., 2—5·5-in.).	
20 destroyers.	
Large number of transports between Singora and Patani.	
(b) Air	
Vague information about bomber forces based in Indo-China.	Large bomber forces based in South Indo-China and possibly Thailand (T.O.R. 0125/9/12).

APPENDIX C

BRITISH AIR FORCES IN MALAYA, 29TH NOVEMBER, 1941

SQUADRON	TYPE OF A/C	ESTABLISHMENT	LOCATION	REMARKS
34. (M.B.)	BlenheimIV	16	Tengah ..	—
62. (M.B.)	Blenheim I	14	Alor Star ..	—
36. (T.B.)	Vildebeeste	12	Seletar ..	To be re-equipped with Beauforts.
100. (T.B.)	Vildebeeste	12	Seletar ..	To be re-equipped with Beauforts.
4. A.A.C.U. ..	Shark ..	6	Tengah ..	—
	Swordfish ..	6		
27. (F)	Blenheim I	12	Kallang ..	Fighter / Bomber Squadron.
67. (F)	Buffalo ..	16	Kluang ..	—
243. (F)	Buffalo ..	16	Kluang ..	—
453. (F), R.A.A.F. ..	Buffalo ..	16	Sembawang	—
488. (F), R.N.Z.A.F.	Buffalo ..	16	Kallang ..	Formed, but not fully operational
1. (G.R.), R.A.A.F.	Hudson ..	12	Sembawang	—
8. (G.R.), R.A.A.F.	Hudson ..	12	Kota Bharu	—
21. (G.P.), R.A.A.F.	Wirraway ..	12	Sembawang	Re-equipping with Buffaloes.
205. (G.R.)	Catalina ..	4	Seletar ..	Two detached, Kogalla (Ceylon).
		182		

APPENDIX D

IMPORTANT SIGNALS: FORCE " G ", NOV:–DEC: 1941

(1)

To Admiralty *From* S.O. Force " G "

Following are my proposals for movements of Force " G " after arrival at the Cape.

2. I am assuming that it remains the intention to give publicity to arrival of Force " G " at the Cape and accordingly propose to remain in that area from 17 to 24 November. Should early arrival at Singapore be more important than publicity this time could be reduced to 48 hours at some inconvenience to engine room and store departments.

3. Following is the form of publicity it is proposed to grant at the Cape. Facilities to be given to Press photographers and controlled interviews to be given by selected officers and men on *Bismarck* action and Atlantic Meeting. No mention to be made of destination of ship. Result to be released when decided by Admiralty.

4. Programme after leaving Cape depends on need for early arrival Singapore.

5. If earliest possible arrival at Singapore is desired, H.M.S. *Prince of Wales* could arrive there 12 days after leaving the Cape, destroyers being left behind when clear of the Cape area.

6. If earliest arrival at Singapore is not essential, it would be of advantage to meet C.-in-C., East Indies at Ceylon, remaining 3 days. H.M.S. *Prince of Wales* could then arrive at Singapore 16 days after leaving the Cape, destroyers rejoining at Ceylon.

7. If destroyers remain in company throughout, H.M.S. *Prince of Wales* could arrive Singapore 19 days after leaving Cape.

8. In any case propose H.M.S. *Repulse* arrive Singapore (corrupt group)* H.M.S. *Prince of Wales*.

9. Request Their Lordships instructions as to (*a*) policy concerning stay at Cape and publicity at that place, (*b*) need for early arrival after leaving Cape.

T.O.O. 1200Z/6/11./41.

* Admiral Phillips' 1637Z/8/11 (*see* postea, signal (3)) leaves no doubt that " with " or " in company with " was intended.

(2)

Note:—This signal crossed the preceding one, 1200Z/6 from S.O. Force " G ".

To S.O. Force " G ".

Repeated C.-in-C., South Atlantic. *From* Admiralty.
C.-in-C., China.
C.-in-C., East Indies.

IMMEDIATE.

What are your views as to movements of *Prince of Wales*, *Revenge* and *Repulse* in the immediate future?

To save time you might consider going on ahead of your destroyers after passing 45° E.

T.O.O. 1948A/6/11/41.
(for 1st Sea Lord.)

(3)

To Admiralty. *From* S.O. Force " G ".

Your 1950* and your 1948/6, and my 1200Z/6 to Admiralty only and C.-in-C., East Indies, 0752/7.

(Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4 referred to arrangements for meeting with Field Marshal Smuts and movements at the Cape.)

5. Reasons for suggesting in my 1200Z/6 that H.M.S. *Repulse* only should accompany H.M.S. *Prince of Wales* to Singapore in the first instance were as follows.

(A) A force of 2 fast battleships at Singapore should cause Japan concern but should be regarded by her more as a raiding force than as an attempt to form a line of battle against her.

(B) The addition of one " R " class might give the impression that we were trying to form a line of battle, but could only spare 3 ships, thus encouraging Japan.

6. For the above reasons I felt that unless events precipitate matters it might be best for *Revenge* to remain in Indian Ocean until she was joined by *Royal Sovereign* and *Ramillies*, when the 3 ships might come to Singapore towards (? end of) January.

7. If there were a suitable convoy from Australia during the period *Revenge* is available, it might be of advantage for her to proceed to Western Australia and escort it. I do not however consider it desirable that she should at the present time proceed to Australia to fit R.D.F. etc. as was, I believe, contemplated at one time.

8. Admiralty pass to C.-in-C., South Atlantic and C.-in-C., East Indies.

T.O.O. 1637Z/8/11/41.

* Informing Admiral Phillips that Field-Marshal Smuts would be very pleased to see him.

(4)

To N.O.I.C., Simonstown. *From* Admiralty,

1st Sea Lord.

Urgency of F.O. Force " G "'s arrival at Singapore necessitates stay of *Prince of Wales* being as short as possible over 48 hours. Request air passage for Admiral Phillips to Pretoria to be ready as soon after his arrival as he may require it.

2. Facilities for Press photographers and controlled interviews will be afforded on board. Date of release will be communicated to you by F.O., Force " G ".

T.O.O. 1945A/9/11/41.

(5)

To S.O. Force " G ". *From* Admiralty.

Repeated C.-in-C., East Indies.

C.-in-C., China.

C.-in-C., Mediterranean.

A.T. 1954/9 to S.O. Force " G " only.

As it has been necessary for political reasons to announce the strengthening of our forces in the Eastern area, it is considered undesirable for capital ships to arrive at Singapore without a destroyer screen.

2. The following movements are therefore to be carried out:—

A. *Prince of Wales* is to leave Capetown with destroyers and proceed to Ceylon. Destroyers may be slipped when clear of Cape area if S.O. Force " G " wishes to prolong his time in Ceylon to meet C.-in-C., East Indies.

(B) *Repulse* is to proceed to Ceylon as proposed by C.-in-C., East Indies to arrive by 1st December. She is to form part of Force " G " from her time of arrival.

C. *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* screened by the 4 destroyers referred to in A.T. 0155/29th October are to proceed in company to Singapore as soon as practicable after arrival of the destroyers in Ceylon.

D. *Revenge* is to arrive at Ceylon at an early date after the departure of Force " G ", convenient to her convoy duties.

T.O.O. 1516A/11.

1st Sea Lord.

Approved 1st Lord.

(6)

From Admiralty. *To* A.I.G.21, A.I.G.13*

A. C.-in-C., Eastern Fleet, is expected to arrive Singapore about 6/12. He will assume duties laid down in paragraph B of A.T. 1719/28/10† at 0800 Local Time on day following his arrival, except that the command and administration of naval forces and establishments at present carried out by C.-in-C., China, will not come under his command until the flag of C.-in-C., China, is struck in accordance with A.T. 1151/3/10 (to C.-in-C., China, only).

B. Reference paragraph F. of A.T. 1719/28/10 the following units are to be considered as forming part of the Eastern Fleet:—*Prince of Wales*, *Repulse*, *Revenge*, *Electra*, *Express*, *Encounter*, *Jupiter*, and such other units of the China Station as desired by C.-in-C., Eastern Fleet.

T.O.O. 1139A/24/11/41.

(7)

From: Admiralty. *To:* S.O. Force " G ".

A. In view of the unsatisfactory situation vis à vis Japan it is considered desirable (unless you see reasons for not doing so) that you should fly to Singapore so as to get on with your planning and be ready to assume command in the Eastern theatre, should war develop.

B. It is also hoped that by doing this you may be able to get contact with the Admiral commanding U.S. Pacific Fleet‡ or his representative as early as practicable.

T.O.O. 1804/28/11/41.

(8)

To Admiralty. *From* S.O. Force " G ".

IMMEDIATE

Personal for First Sea Lord. Admiralty Message 1139/24 November paragraph (*a*). Intend to assume duty referred to at 0800, Wednesday, 3rd December. Present intention is that flag of C.-in-C., China, shall remain flying until completion of Naval Conference.

2. In view of Admiralty Message 1804A 28th November it appears that the situation after preliminary British Conference might then preclude my visit to Manila.

3. After discussion with United States Naval Liaison Officer I consider it of great importance that I should make contact with Admiral Hart.

4. Intend, therefore, unless you see reason to contrary, to proceed to Manila ex-officio on Thursday 4th returning on Sunday 7th accepting the (? fact) that I shall not at the time be fully informed on the questions concerning Dominions. Admiral Palliser will remain Singapore.

5. Preliminary British Conference to begin Monday 8th December.

6. Question whether a further visit to Manila is necessary after the preliminary British Conference for conference referred to in one (*b*) of Admiralty Message 0104, 26th November, can be decided later.

T.O.O. 0951Z/1/12/41.

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* All Commanders-in-Chief, and certain other Flag Officers and Commonwealth Naval Authorities directly concerned.

† This signal laid down the duties and responsibilities of the C.-in-C., Eastern Fleet, so far as they could be foreseen.

‡Amended to read Asiatic Fleet, 1051A/29/11/41.

(9)

To S.O. Force " G ". *From* Admiralty.

IMMEDIATE

Personal from First Sea Lord.

Your 0951Z/1.

(A) Paragraphs 1, 5 & 6 are noted.

(B) Paragraphs 2, 3 & 4—Concur.

(C) You and I are in agreement that C.-in-C., Eastern Fleet, should normally be afloat. It is possible, however, that during the present period of uncertainty whilst conferences are in progress you might consider it desirable to send *Prince of Wales* and/or *Repulse* away from Singapore in order that the uncertainty of their whereabouts would disconcert the Japanese.

Under these circumstances you might find it necessary to hoist your flag on shore temporarily.

T.O.O. 1843A/1/12/41.

Asst. Secretary to 1st Sea Lord.

(10)

To S.O. Force " G ". *From* Admiralty.

IMMEDIATE

Personal from First Sea Lord.

A. C.-in-C., Asiatic Fleet, has no doubt informed you that three Japanese submarines were sighted off Saigon proceeding South.

B. It seems likely their task will be to watch Singapore.

C. Request you will consider the following alternatives:—

1. To ask Admiral Hart if he could send the 8 U.S. destroyers to Singapore on a visit so that they would be immediately available if the balloon went up.
2. To get the *Prince of Wales* and/or *Repulse* away from Singapore to the Eastward.

T.O.O. 0157A/3/12/41.

(11)

To Admiralty. *From* C.-in-C., Eastern Fleet.

IMPORTANT

Personal for First Sea Lord. Your 1843/1(? 1).

It has been necessary to put in hand retubing of distiller of H.M.S. *Prince of Wales* today 3rd December. Work should be completed in 7 days and distiller at maximum (? 72) hours notice during work. Ship capable of proceeding for 48 hours on reserve feed tanks.

Intend to send H.M.S. *Repulse*, H.M.A.S. *Vampire* and H.M.S. *Tenedos* on short visit Port Darwin leaving Singapore Friday 5th December.

T.O.O., 0923Z/3/12/41.

(12)

To Admiralty. *From* C.-in-C., Eastern Fleet.

IMMEDIATE

Personal 1st Sea Lord.

My 0923Z 3rd was despatched before receipt of your 0157A 3rd.

2. I will discuss your paragraph C(i) with Admiral Hart.

T.O.O. 1213Z/3/12/41.

(13)

To Admiralty *From* C.-in-C., Eastern Fleet.

Personal for 1st Sea Lord.

63.1 Discussion with Admiral Hart very friendly and we can expect full co-operation.

2. Draft of points of agreement, transmitted via C.N.O. was originally drawn up to provide discussion, but at conclusion Admiral Hart was very anxious to telegraph this to Washington and London*. I reluctantly agreed, making it clear that I had not yet met Dominion and Dutch and would have preferred to do so before sending any signal home.

3. Admiral Hart was reluctant to part with his destroyers even when at war and this is referred to in point of agreement. He was not willing to send them to Singapore at once but I have again asked him today to send four in view of situation.

4. Dutch Admiral arrives tomorrow Monday and I hope to make sufficient progress with Dominion representative to be able to ask him and U.S. representative to meeting in the afternoon.

T.O.O. 1733Z/7 [0103/GH/8/12].

T.O.R. 1230Z/11/12/41.

(14)

To C.-in-C., Eastern Fleet. *From* Admiralty.

MOST IMMEDIATE

Pass to C.-in-C. Far East.

A. No decision has yet been taken by H.M. Government but on the assumption that it may be decided that if a Japanese expedition is located in the South China Sea in such a position that its course indicates that it is proceeding towards Thailand, Malaya, Borneo or Netherlands East Indies, report what action it would be possible to take with naval or air forces.

B. Was any co-operation with U.S. Forces in such an eventuality arranged as a result of C.-in-C. Eastern Fleet's visit to Manila?

T.O.O. 1329A/7/12/41.

Secretary to 1st Sea Lord.

* This signal is omitted, as the points agreed on were rendered nugatory by the Japanese action.

(15)

To Admiralty *From* C.-in-C., Eastern Fleet.

1. (Corrupt group: (?) Provided that) as I hope I can make 4 destroyers available intend to proceed with *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* dusk tonight 8/12 to attack enemy force off Kota Bharu daylight Wednesday 10th.

2. Endeavours will be made to estimate strength of enemy Naval forces by air R/C but large proportions of aircraft are naturally required for attack.

T.O.O. 0204Z/8/12/41.

APPENDIX D (1)

IMPORTANT SIGNALS: FORCE "Z", 8TH–10TH DECEMBER, 1941

To C.-in-C., Eastern Fleet. *From* Chief of Staff, Eastern Fleet.

IMMEDIATE

My 2253/8th Part 1 begins. R.A.F. reconnaissance to depth of 100 miles to the north-westward of you will be provided by 1 Catalina from 0800 onwards tomorrow 9th.

(ii) It is hoped that a dawn reconnaissance of coast near Singora can be carried out on Wednesday 10th.

(iii) Fighter protection on Wednesday 10th will not, repeat not, be possible. My 2253/8th Part 1 end. Part 2 follows.

T.O.O. 2251 G H/8.

T.O.R. 0106/9/12.

My 2253/8th Part 2.

(iv) Japanese have large bomber forces based Southern Indo-China and possibly also in Thailand. C.-in-C., Far East, has requested General MacArthur to carry out attack with his long-range bombers on Indo-China aerodromes as soon as possible.

(v) Kota Bharu aerodrome has been evacuated and we seem to be losing grip on other northern aerodromes due to enemy action.

(vi) Military position near Kota Bharu does not seem good, but details are not available.

T.O.O. 2253 G H/8.

T.O.R. 0125/9/12.

(2)

To C.-in-C., Eastern Fleet. *From* Chief of Staff, Eastern Fleet.

MOST IMMEDIATE

One battleship, "M" class cruiser, 11 destroyers and a number of transports reported close to coast between Kota Bharu and Perhentian Island by air reconnaissance this afternoon.

T.O.O. 1125 Z/9/12/41 (1855 G H/9/12).

T.O.R. 1147Z/9/12/41 (1917 G H/9/12).

Correct my 1125/9. Force was sighted at 0900 Z/9 (1630 G H/9).

T.O.O. 1155Z/9/12/41 (1925 G H/9).

(3)

To C.-in-C., Eastern Fleet. *From* Chief of Staff, Eastern Fleet.

IMMEDIATE

To C.-in-C., E.F. Only significant enemy reports is contained in my 1126 Z 9th.[1] Enemy apparently continuing landing in Kota Bharu area which should be fruitful as well as Singora.

(2) On the other hand enemy bombers on South Indo-China aerodromes are in force and undisturbed. They could attack you five hours after sighting and much depends on whether you have been seen to-day.

Two carriers may be in Saigon area.

(3) Military situation at Kota Bharu appears difficult. Aerodrome is in enemy hands.

(4) All our northern aerodromes are becoming untenable due to enemy air action. C.-in-C., F.E., hints he is considering concentrating all air efforts on defence of Singapore area.

(5) Extremely difficult to give you clearer picture because air reconnaissance communications are so slow due partly to damage to aerodromes.

TO.O. 1415 Z/9 (2145 G H/9).

T.O.R. 1532 Z/9 (2302 G H/9).

(4)

To Force " Z ". *From* C.-in-C., Eastern Fleet.

Besides a minor landing at Kota Bharu which was not followed, landings have been made between Patani and Singora and a major landing 90 miles north of Singora.

2. Little is known of enemy major forces in the vicinity. It is believed that *Kongo* is the only capital ship likely to be met. Three *Atago* type, one *Kako* type, and two *Zintu* type cruisers have been reported. A number of destroyers possibly of Fleet type are likely to be met.[2]

3. My object is to surprise and sink transports and enemy warships before air attack can develop. Objective chosen will depend on air reconnaissance. Intend to arrive objective after sunrise tomorrow 10th. If an opportunity to bring *Kongo* to action occurs this is to take precedence over all other action.

4. Subject to C.O.'s freedom of manoeuvre in an emergency, Force "Z" will remain in close order and will be manoeuvred as a unit until action is joined. When the signal " Act independently " is made or at discretion of

[1] ? 1125 Z/9/.
[2] *See* Appendix E.

C.O., *Repulse* will assume freedom of manoeuvre remaining in tactical support but engaging from a wide enough angle to facilitate fall of shot.

5. Intend to operate at 25 knots unless a chase develops and subsequently to retire at maximum speed endurance will allow.

6. Capital ships should attempt to close below 20,000 yards until fire is effective, but should avoid offering an end on target. Ships must be prepared to change from delay to non-delay fuzes according to target.

7. *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* are each to have one aircraft fuelled and ready to fly off if required. If flown off aircraft must return to land base. Kota Bharu aerodrome is understood to be out of action.

8. *Tenedos* will be detached before dark to return independently to Singapore.

9. Remaining destroyers may be detached during the night 9th/10th should enemy information require a high speed of advance. In such case these destroyers are to retire towards Anamba Island at 10 knots until a rendezvous is ordered by W/T.

1315 G H/9/12/41.

(5)

Note. This signal was given to the *Tenedos* at 1625/9 for transmission at 0800/10, by which time she would be off the Anambas. The *Tenedos* was detached from Force " Z " at 1835/9.

To Chief of Staff, Eastern Fleet. *From* C.-in-C.

IMMEDIATE

Earliest time Force " Z " is likely to reach point B[1] of my 1340 G H/8 is 0630/11 and point A[2] at 0900/11. You should send as many effective destroyers, including U.S., as available to pass through point A and meet me at daylight 11th if possible. Point B will probably be approached on course 130°. Acknowledge.

T.O.O. 1455 G H/9/12/41.

(6)

To C.-in-C., Eastern Fleet. *From* Chief of Staff, Eastern Fleet.

IMMEDIATE.

Enemy reported landing Kuantan, latitude 03° 50′ North.

T.O.O. 1505 Z/9/12/41. (2235 G H/9.)

T.O.R. 1605 Z/9/12/41. (2355 G H/9.)

[1] Point B—Lat. 3° 25′ N., long. 106° 40′ E.
[2] Point A—Lat. 2° 37′ N., long. 106° 28′ E.

APPENDIX D(2)

MESSAGES RECEIVED IN WAR ROOM, SINGAPORE, IN CONNECTION WITH ATTACK ON Prince of Wales AND Repulse

TIME OF RECEIPT IN WAR ROOM (ZONE MINUS 7½)	FROM	TO	MESSAGE AND TIME OF ORIGIN
1204	*Repulse* ..	Any British Man-of-War	Enemy aircraft bombing. My position 134 NYTW 22 x 09. (1158).
1240	(?) *Prince of Wales*	(?)	EMERGENCY. Have been struck by a torpedo on port side. NYTW 0222 R06 4 torpedoes. *Repulse* hit by 1 torpedo. Send destroyers. (1220.)
1304	Senior Officer, Force " Z "	Any British Man-of-War	EMERGENCY. Send all available tugs. My position 003° 40′ N. 104° 30′ E. (1252.)
1310	*Electra*.. ..	(?) Any British Man-of-War	MOST IMMEDIATE. H.M.S. *Prince of Wales* hit by 4 torpedoes in position 003° 45′ N. 104° 10′ E. *Repulse* sunk. Send destroyers. (0530Z). (1300 GH.)
1310	Senior Officer, Force " Z "	Any British Man-of-War	MOST IMMEDIATE. H.M.S. *Prince of Wales* disabled and out of control. (1300.)
1311	*Prince of Wales*	Any British Man-of-War	EMERGENCY. Send all available tugs. My position now is EQTW 40 (?). (0531Z.) (1301 GH.)
1317	Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Fleet	Chief of Staff, Singapore	MOST IMMEDIATE. Am disembarking men not required for fighting ship. Send—(?)—(?)—fast as possible.
1317	*Electra*.. ..	Any British Man-of-War	MOST IMMEDIATE. My 0530 send tugs. (?).
1321	*Electra*.. ..	Any British Man-of-War	MOST IMMEDIATE. H.M.S. *Prince of Wales* sunk. (0548Z.) (1318 GH.)

APPENDIX E

DETAILS OF JAPANESE WARSHIPS MENTIONED

SHIP	DATE OF COMPLETION	ESTIMATED SPEED	ARMAMENT
Kongo .. *Haruna* ..	1913*	24	8—14·2-in., 14—5·9-in., 8—5-in., H.A.
Chokai .. *Atago* .. *Takao* ..	1932	33	10—7·87-in., 4—4·8-in., H.A. 9—24-in. Torpedo tubes.
Kumano .. *Suzuya* .. *Mogami* .. *Mikuma* ..	1935–1937	33	10—7·87-in., 8—5·1-in., H.A. 12—24-in. Torpedo tubes.
Kako ..	1926	33	6—8·87-in., 4—4·7-in., H.A. 8—24-in., Torpedo tubes.
Sendai .. *Yura* .. *Kinu* .. *Zintu* ..	1921–1925	33	7—5·5-in., 2—3-in., H.A. 8—21-in., Torpedo tubes.
Fleet destroyers	1928–1935	34	5 or 6—5-in., 6 to 9—21-in., tubes.
	1920–1927	34	4—4·7-in., 6—21-in., tubes.

* Reconstructed, 1935–37.

APPENDIX F

SUMMARY OF AIR ATTACKS ON FORCE "Z", 10TH DECEMBER, 1941

TIME	ATTACKING FORCE	RESULT
1118	9 H.L.B.	One hit on *Repulse*; no serious damage.
1144	9 T/B.	One, probably two, torpedo hits on *Prince of Wales* Ship listed 11½° to port, speed reduced to 15 knots, ship never properly under control again. Five 5·25-in. turrets put out of action. One aircraft shot down.
1156	9 T/B.	Attack on *Repulse*, which avoided all torpedoes.
1158	9 H.L.B.	Attack on *Repulse*, no hits.
1222	9 T/B.*	One hit on *Repulse*, port side. Three or four hits on *Prince of Wales*, starboard side.
1225	9 T/B.	Four hits on *Repulse*, sank, 1233. Two aircraft shot down.
1244	9 H.L.B.	One hit on *Prince of Wales*, sank, 1320.

Note:—About eight Japanese aircraft were believed at the time to have been shot down, but according to Japanese statements, only three were lost in the action.

* More than nine T/B's. may have been employed for these attacks.

APPENDIX F (1)

SUMMARY OF ATTACKS FROM JAPANESE SOURCE

TIME OF ATTACK (Z MINUS 7½)	AIR GROUP	NO. OF AIRCRAFT	LOAD	TARGET	HITS CLAIMED	POSITION OF HITS	ASSAULT LOSSES	REMARKS
1115	Mihoro	8	2—250 Kg. bombs	Both ships	*Repulse*, 1	Just aft amidships	—	Each aircraft dropped 1 bomb in first attack; the formation then circled and carried out a second attack later (*Repulse* time, 1158).
1145	Mihoro	8	—	*Repulse*	—	—	—	
1142–1150	Genzan	16	1 torpedo*	Both ships	*P.O.W.*4	Port side	1	
					Repulse, 5	3 starboard, 2 port		
1200	Mihoro	6	1 torpedo*	*Repulse*	4	Unknown	—	
1215–1225	Kanoya	26	1 torpedo*	*P.O.W.*	3 or 4	Starboard side	—	
				Repulse	Over 16	Unknown	2	
1235	Mihoro	8	2—500 Kg. bombs	In sea	—	—	—	Bombs released prematurely owing to trouble with leader's bomb release gear.
1245	Mihoro	9	2—500 Kg. bombs	*P.O.W.*	2	Near main mast	—	

* Torpedoes used were Type 91, weighing about 800 Kg., with warhead of approximately 150 Kg., speed setting 42 knots.

APPENDIX G

H.M.S. *Prince of Wales: COMPASS PLATFORM NARRATIVE*

Note:—This record was taken by Paymaster Lieutenant W. T. Blunt, R.N., who was action recorder on the compass platform. On abandoning ship he took his original rough record with him, and wrote out a fair copy as soon as possible after being picked up by the *Electra*.

1113. Opened fire on eight high-level bombers which attacked *Repulse*. *Repulse* was straddled by bombs and reported some damage and small fire from two near misses.

1141½. Opened fire on nine torpedo bombers coming to attack from port side.

1144. Hit by torpedo on port side aft of the bridge (exact position not known).

1144½. One aircraft shot down, falling in sea close on the starboard side.

1145. Close miss past the starboard quarter by torpedo passing from forward aft.

1149½. *Repulse* attacked by one aircraft which dropped one torpedo.

1150½. Reported: One aircraft crashed in sea, Green 140. At this stage a heavy list to port had developed.

1157½. Opened fire on six aircraft on the starboard side, thought to be attacking *Repulse*.

1158. Cease fire.

1159. Aircraft seen to have turned away.

1205. Man overboard, port side.

1206½. *Vampire* ordered to pick him up.

1210. Hoisted " Not under control ".

1213½. Out of touch with " X " engine room. (Noted that bridge was out of touch with Damage Control Headquarters since shortly after hit.)

1220. Seven aircraft on starboard bow.

1221½. Opened fire.

1223. Two hits by torpedoes on starboard side, a few seconds apart. One very near the stem, the other in the after part of the ship.

1224½. One hit starboard side under compass platform, by torpedo.

1226½. *Repulse* shot down two aircraft.

1227. *Repulse* observed to be listing to port. ? hit by two torpedoes.

1228. Destroyers ordered to close *Repulse*.

1230. Nine high-level bombers on port bow.

1230. " X " engine room only working.

1232. *Repulse* sinking.

1233. *Repulse* sunk.

1241. Opened fire on eight high-level bombers on port bow.

1244. Hit by one bomb. (Reported as being starboard side catapult deck.)

1250. Asked Singapore for tugs.

1310 (approx.). Order to inflate lifebelts.

1315 (approx.). List to port began to increase rapidly.

1320 (approx.). Ship sank, capsizing to port.

APPENDIX H

EXTRACT FROM REPORT OF FLIGHT-LIEUTENANT T. A. VIGORS TO C.-IN-C., FAR EASTERN FLEET, DATED 11TH DECEMBER, 1941, FROM R.A.A.F. STATION, SEMBAWANG

. . . I had the privilege to be the first aircraft to reach the crews of the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse* after they had been sunk. I say the privilege for, during the next hour while I flew low over them, I witnessed a show of that indomitable spirit for which the Royal Navy is so famous. I have seen show of spirit in this war over Dunkirk, during the " Battle of Britain," and in the London night raids, but never before have I seen anything comparable with what I saw yesterday. I passed over thousands who had been through an ordeal the greatness of which they alone can understand, for it is impossible to pass on one's feelings in disaster to others.

Even to an eye so inexperienced as mine it was obvious that the three destroyers were going to take hours to pick up those hundreds of men clinging to bits of wreckage and swimming round in the filthy oily water. Above all this the threat of another bombing and machine gun attack was imminent. Every one of those men must have realised that. Yet, as I flew round, every man waved and put his thumb up as I flew over him.

After an hour lack of petrol forced me to leave, but during that hour I had seen many men in dire danger waving, cheering and joking as if they were holiday makers at Brighton waving at a low-flying aircraft. It shook me, for here was something above human nature. I take off my hat to them, for in them I saw the spirit which wins wars.

I apologise for taking up your valuable time, but I thought you should know of the incredible conduct of your men . . .

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REFERENCE CHART : PACIFIC OCEAN

PLAN I

	Singapore	Kamranh Bay	Manila	Hong Kong	Jaluit	Yokohama	Pearl Harbour
Bangkok	800	757	1429	1458	4355	2948	6066
Batavia	525	1092	1562	1788	3911	3221	5909
Colombo	1567						
Guam	2574	2111	1497	1800	1573	1353	3330
Hong Kong	1438	710	630	—	3354	1584	4833
Jaluit	4044	3647	3033	3354	—	2450	2101
Kamranh B.	740	—	711	710	3647	2207	5326
Manila	1330	711	—	630	3033	1756	4762
Panama	10488	9816	9355	9196	6662	7680	4683
Pearl Hr.	5869	5326	4762	4833	2101	3389	—
Pt. Darwin	1887	2241	1807	2341	2826	3021	4899
Singapore	—	740	1330	1438	4044	2888	5869
Yap	2177	1770	1156	1598	1896	1568	3748
Yokohama	2888	2207	1756	1584	2450	—	3389
	Singapore	Kamranh Bay	Manila	Hong Kong	Jaluit	Yokohama	Pearl Harbour

80°E. 100° 120° 140° 160° 180° 160° 140° 120° 100° 80°W.

40° N. 20° 0° 20° 40° S.

Sakhalin I.
Kuril Is.
Aleutian Is.
DUTCH HARBOUR
KISKA
Pt. Simpson
Vancouver
Esqimalt
Japan Islands
Tokyo
YOKOHAMA
NORTH AMERICA
San Francisco
S. Diego
Guayamas
Cuba
Acapulco
Clipperton I.
Cocos I.
PANAMA
Galapagos Is.
Callao
Iquique
St. Felix
Valparaiso
Juan Fernandez
Chiloe
Gulf of Penas
Shanghai
ASIA
Chungking
HONGKONG
Formosa
Midway I.
PEARL HARBOUR
Hawaii
Marianas or Ladrones
GUAM
Philippine Is.
MANILA
BANGKOK
KAMRANH BAY
YAP
TRUK
Caroline Is.
Marshall Is.
JALUIT
Gilbert Is.
Phœnix Is.
Union Is.
Marquesas Is.
Sta. Cruz Is.
Ellice Is.
Samoa Is.
Fiji Is.
New Hebrides
Tahiti
Pitcairn I.
Easter I.
Kermadec
Norfolk I.
Ld. Howe I.
New Caledonia
COLOMBO
Ceylon
Kota Bahru
Penang
SINGAPORE
Balik Papan
Sumatra
BATAVIA
Soerabaya
Celebes
New Guinea
Solomon Is.
Port Moresby
Sunda Str.
Timor
Christmas I.
Cocos or Keeling Is.
Chagos Arch.
Diego Garcia
PT. DARWIN
Cossack
AUSTRALIA
Brisbane
Perth
Adelaide
Sydney
Melbourne
Hobart
TASMANIA
NEW ZEALAND
Auckland
Wellington
Chatham I.
Antipodes Is.
Auckland Is.
Macquarie I.

MALAYA AND GULF OF SIAM OPERATIONS, 6–10 DEC. 1941

Zone Time Minus 7½ Positions and movements are approximate only

KEY

BRITISH shewn in Red Japanese in Blue

Important enemy reports (Br. and Jap.) in Black

Airfields in use ○○. Original Jap: S/M disposn. ⌓

98°E. 100° 102° 104° 108E°

10°N. 6° 2°N.

Bangkok

Mergui

Burma — Thailand Frontier

Prachuap 0830/8

Chumphon 0830/8

Victoria Pt.

Bandon 0830/8

Nakhon Sri Tamaret

Singora 0230/8

Thepha

Pattani

Langkawi

Alor Star

Kota Bharu

0025/8

Gong Kedah

Malaya — Thailand Frontier

Sungei Patani

Penang

Perhentian Is.

Posn. C

I56

Gulf of Siam

Frontier — Indo-China — Thailand

French Indo-China

Kampat

Trach

Kohtron

Kamranh Bay

Mihoru & Kanoya Air Groups

Air Striking Force leaves 0700/10

Saigon

Gensan Air Group

Soktran 40 Fighters

of striking Force

track

Poulo Condore

2330/9

Kongo

Haruna

Atago

Takao

10 Destroyers

RV 0230/10

Pt. Camau

A/C Reports Rec'd at Singapore, 6-7 Dec.

1835/7

1246/6

1300/6

1212/6

Approximate

Chokai (🚩): 7th Cr: Div: (*Kumano, Suzuya Mikuma, Mogami*), 3 Dr: *Kinu, Yura*, Cruising p.m. 9th Dec.

7th Cr. Div. 1930/9

2015/9

1930/9

1835/9 *Tenedos* detached to Singapore

0645/10

3 Jap A/C sighted

Intended posn. 0600/10

Intended route, *P. of W.* and *Repulse*

Jap. S/M Reports of Force "Z"

0210/10 (I58)

0050/10

0210/10

1400/9

1343/9

I58 I57 I62 I64 I66 I65

1343/9 (I65)

0600/10

0630/10 Enemy A/C sighted

I55 I54

1100/10 Enemy Air Attacks

Repulse sunk

P. of W. sunk, 1320

1233 Posns. approx.

0800/10 *Express* investigates harbour

Kuantan

Kuala Lumpur

Pulo Tioman

Mines laid 6-7 Dec.

Anamba Is.

Posn. B

0629/9, A/C reptd. by *Vampire*

Posn. A

Tenedos bombed 0950-1020/10

0056/9

I121

Kluang

Singapore

Force "Z" sailed, 1735/8

I122

I23

Natuna Is.

Saigon, 400'

Soktran 400'

Borneo

Malaya

Sumatra

Scale: Sea Miles

0 30 60 90 120 150 180

C.B.H. 22714

RESTRICTED